



IGNITE

TE HIRINGA O TE TANGATA

ISSUE 16 / WINTER 2020 / HŌTOKE 2020

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New firefighters ready
for a new world

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All-of-Government
response to COVID-19

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Profile: Rebecca Keoghan,
Deputy Chair



Ignite is the official magazine for Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

**Te Hiringa o te Tangata –
To have drive, zest, determination.
To have heart and soul.**

Ignite represents the voices of the men and women across the country who dedicate themselves to protecting life, the environment and property in their communities. It is produced by the Fire and Emergency Communications Team, National Headquarters, Level 12, 80 The Terrace, Wellington, 6140.

Contributions to Ignite

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KIA ORA KOUTOU

The word “unprecedented” has been used a lot to describe COVID-19, and quite appropriately as the pandemic has put Fire and Emergency and the communities we serve into unfamiliar territory.

What has remained familiar is the importance of our service in those communities, the application of the same risk management approach we use every day, and your professionalism throughout this period.

At the heart of all our planning during this pandemic has been one very clear principle: keep our people safe, so they can continue to keep our communities safe. I echo the Chair’s thanks on page 3 for the way you have all adapted to new instructions as we’ve moved up and down the Alert Levels, sometimes at pace.

Many of us have had to adapt our traditional ways of working. But very quickly, we’ve found technology solutions that have allowed us to continue delivering key projects and maintain business continuity. This issue of Ignite is full of articles that celebrate the many ways we have responded to COVID-19’s challenges. For example, Te Ihu’s virtual

refresher training reaching 126 volunteers in one session (page 12) and our valued contribution to the All-of-Government response (page 8).

The pandemic has also reminded us about the importance of whānau. Across the pages of this issue you can read about some of the members of our Fire and Emergency whānau, including some of our newest firefighters who graduated as we went into lockdown (page 4), our Deputy Chair, Rebecca Keoghan (page 14) and some volunteers with strong family firefighting connections (page 17).

Thank you all for the way you have risen to the challenges COVID-19 has put in front of you, and for continuing to care for and serve your communities during this difficult time.

Rhys Jones, Chief Executive

FROM THE CHAIR: THANK YOU



The past few months have been some of the most challenging that many of us have encountered in our working and personal lives.

On behalf of the Board of Fire and Emergency New Zealand, I want to say how proud we are of the way you have all responded to working under COVID-19, and maintained your focus on keeping yourselves and your communities safe.

You have risen to many challenges, from adapting to new operational procedures, to setting up home offices and managing daily work alongside family life.

Our communities trust us and depend on us to be there when they need us, 365 days a year, but particularly during

challenging times like we’ve experienced this year. The recent announcement that Fire and Emergency has been named the most trusted agency within the public sector in Colmar Brunton’s annual Public Sector Reputation Index Survey for the fifth year running, is a tribute to you all.

The social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Fire and Emergency’s operating environment and the communities we serve will be felt for many years to come. Our focus in the next 12 months will be on continuing to work closely with our emergency partners and other agencies as New Zealand responds to, and recovers from, COVID-19.

Once again, thank you for your support of your communities and Fire and Emergency during these challenging times.

Paul Swain, Fire and Emergency New Zealand Board Chair



Construction of the screening facilities outside Waitakere Hospital

USAR HELPS HOSPITALS

When New Zealand’s hospitals were preparing for a worst-case COVID-19 scenario in mid-March, the Auckland District Health Board approached Urban Search and Rescue for assistance in setting up temporary triage facilities at Auckland, Waitakere and North Shore hospitals. Hawke’s Bay Hospital also reached out for help.

The hospitals required expert help in an extreme emergency and USAR had the capability and equipment to respond quickly.

The USAR teams erected screening tents with interior divisions made of heavy-duty plastic dividers to reduce transmission risk. They also installed lighting with hospitals providing wash tubs and heating.

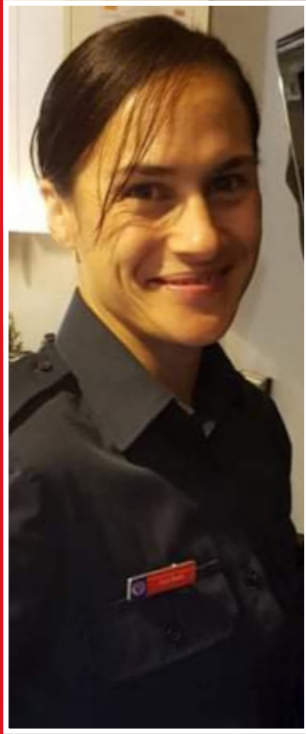
As triage tents are no longer needed, each one is decommissioned following strict health and safety procedures.

Phil Grace, National USAR Operations Manager, says the priority during the decommissioning was the safety of the

USAR teams, protecting them from potential COVID-19 pathogens.

“These facilities provided a vital place to assist with triage and screening patients, and when more permanent structures were built, we requested the tents were left vacant for a minimum of 72 hours before decommissioning.

“Hospital personnel then did a deep clean, and our team followed in full PPE gear for decontamination of the tents, and completed a second washdown using surface sanitisers. It was a great service to offer at a critical time for hospitals,” said Phil.



Left to right: Tara Reed; Rohan Kui accepts the Top Recruit Award from Ian Pickard, Training Programmes and National Training Centre Manager; Andrew Eckhold.

NEW FIREFIGHTERS READY FOR A NEW WORLD

When 22 recruits began their 12-week course at the National Training Centre in mid-January, they had no idea they'd be graduating into a very different world by the end of it.

The course finished just over a week early as Alert Level 4 lockdown was announced. While all the necessary training and exams had been completed, recruits did miss out on applying what they had learnt in incident situations, as well as a full graduation ceremony.

"That was gutting," said Rohan Kui, who was voted top recruit by his trainers and peers. "It was disappointing not being able to celebrate with family – but we understood they were extreme circumstances."

He said it was quite a change going from the intensity of the course to a different challenge at home.

"I was home-schooling my kids for two weeks before starting at Whanganui Fire Station – that took a whole new set of skills and level of patience!"

Tara Reed was assigned to Invercargill Fire Station and couldn't wait to get started.

"Because of lockdown I couldn't get into the station before officially starting, but once I was there my watch was so

welcoming. My first call out came on the second night – so good to put what I'd learnt into practice."

Andrew Eckhold, a fellow Southlander, was also assigned to Invercargill and had to come up to speed quickly with the new changes.

"It was a different environment under lockdown with new PPE requirements, minimal crossover between watches, no community activity and training confined to the station – but I'm here doing what I've been trained to do and it's brilliant."

While their course ended early, all three agree it was an exceptional experience.

"We came from a wide range of backgrounds and ages. We started off as strangers, became friends and left as family – we'll never forget it," said Tara.



RESCUE TRAINING WITH OUR DEFENCE PARTNERS

A long-planned training event, including international participants, went ahead in Palmerston North just before lockdown restrictions came into place.

Twenty trainers from Fire and Emergency, along with nine from the Army and six from the Air Force came together at Linton Defence Camp for a refresher course on rescue tools.

Keith Pedley, National Operations Advisor for Response Capability said it was a great opportunity to train alongside our defence partners in an area of shared importance.

"We learned a lot from each other on different insights and approaches to rescue work. It's important to learn new ways of doing things, but also to have a more consistent approach across the services to rescue training delivery. It was great to achieve both."

The course covered a lot of ground, including updates on new international techniques using current equipment, the risks and differences in extraction techniques for hybrid/ EV vehicles and those with hydrogen fuel cells, and heavy rescue stabilisation.

"The feedback's been fantastic," said Keith. "It's rare to get most of our trainers together at one event, especially when we can offer hands-on training. We've had a lot of requests to do it more often and we're looking into that now."

VOLUNTEERS SHARE THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO COMMUNITIES

During lockdown, we asked our volunteers to share recent photos of themselves and their brigades in action in their communities – and here’s a selection. You may recognise some from our National Volunteer Week campaign in mid-June. Thanks to everyone who contributed.



BUILDING OUR BEHAVIOUR AND CONDUCT OFFICE

We are creating a Fire and Emergency where everyone feels safe, welcome and included. To do this, we must address the unwanted behaviour in our organisation.

As part of the Positive Workplace Culture Programme we have set up a Behaviour and Conduct Office to be the centre for education and training on values-based behaviour and to manage complaints.



BUILDING OUR BEHAVIOUR AND CONDUCT OFFICE

Before COVID-19 arrived in New Zealand, we were running Regional Culture Hui around the country to seek feedback on the future of the Behaviour and Conduct Office (BCO) and how we support each other.

The plan was to talk to 340 people at 17 hui, but Level 4 lockdown meant just three were completed, so the BCO project team had to move quickly to find a new way of continuing to seek out the vital feedback.

Brent Mikaera, Interim Director Behaviour and Conduct Office, Carissa Maitland, Interim Complaints Manager and their team set about building an online survey where anyone in the organisation could participate.

“The hui were so valuable in giving us face-to-face, in-depth responses, but the really exciting thing about the survey is that everyone in Fire and Emergency, over 14,000 people, had the chance to directly influence how we shape this important part of our organisation,” said Carissa.

Under lockdown, the team compiled the survey and scripted and filmed a series of videos that featured in it.

“Everyone managed to do this at home and then we pulled it all together on the Microsoft Forms platform. It’s a great result and the survey feedback is now directly feeding into our plan and approach for the Behaviour and Conduct Office. We want to send a huge thanks to everyone who took part,” she said.



HOW TO RAISE A COMPLAINT OR GET ADVICE

Our interim complaints process is here for all Fire and Emergency employees, volunteers, contractors and members of the public. If you’d like to raise a complaint, or have questions you’d like answered, here’s how to do it.



ENQUIRIES AND COMPLAINTS

Complete the Behaviour and Conduct Office Complaints Enquiry form on our website and email to bco@fireandemergency.nz

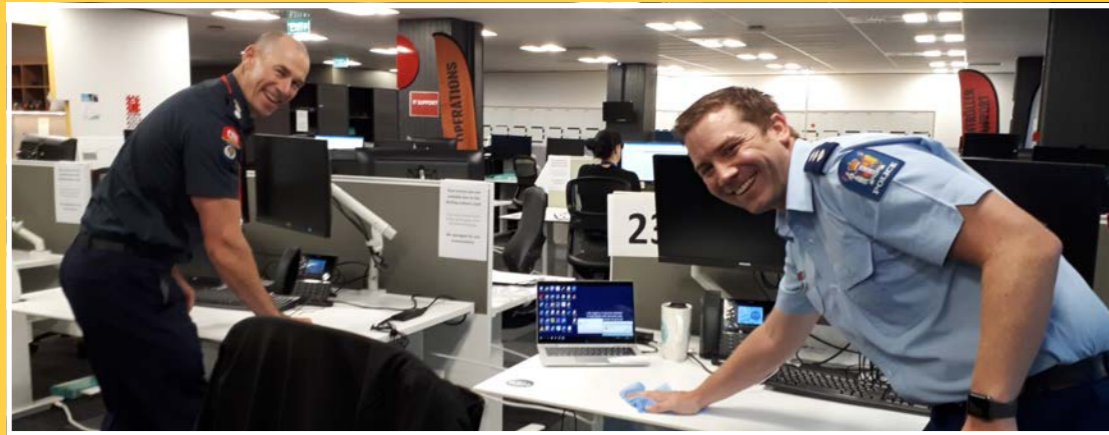
Or phone direct on 04 470 9519, or contact your local HR team.

Please don’t hesitate. We’re here to help you.



GET SUPPORT

If you need safety, health, wellbeing, psychological, welfare or advocacy support, check out the ‘safety, health and wellbeing’ section on the Portal for information and contact details.



Chris Lind, Fire and Emergency Liaison, and Richard Wilson, Police Operations Manager - daily cleaning routine at the National Crisis Management Centre.



One of many briefings to keep teams updated at the National Crisis Management Centre.

ALL-OF-GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Fire and Emergency people are respected for their broad range of transferrable emergency management skills, as well as their ability to step in when needed and quickly start contributing. So, although COVID-19 has been a health emergency, a number of our people have been, and still are, involved in key COVID-19 groups across government.

Glenn Thompson, Deputy Principal Rural Fire Officer, was appointed as Planning Manager in the National Crisis Management Centre until the end of June. His response team has worked with a range of government departments and agencies, creating plans to assist in managing the response.

“There are so many moving parts, but the response of the team has been phenomenal with people from all government departments and agencies working together with one clear goal – to keep New Zealanders safe and prepared,” said Glenn.

“Fire and Emergency’s pre-existing relationships across government proved invaluable during the response, particularly in the early stages.”

Cameron Grylls, National Advisor for Medical Response, took up a role with the National Health Coordination Centre,

to help manage the way Fire and Emergency personnel responded to medical incidents, linking with ambulance services and Ministry of Health.

“We all came together on video conferences every day, gathering information from the Ministry of Health and ambulance sector, to guide our responses to medical incidents. It was hugely important for Fire and Emergency to have a direct link to updates on policies and procedures, particularly around PPE and processes,” said Cameron.

Nick Pyatt, Service Delivery COVID-19 Response Coordinator, organised the team and is proud of their contribution.

“Our team’s skills and capabilities, their pragmatic attitude and dedication were highly valued and made a significant contribution to the All-of-Government COVID-19 response,” he said.

OUR ALL-OF-GOVERNMENT COVID-19 RESPONSE TEAM

- **CHRIS LIND**
Fire and Emergency Liaison at National Crisis Management Centre (NCMC)
- **DARRYL PAPESCH**
Planning Officer, NCMC
- **CAMERON GRYLLES**
Fire and Emergency Liaison at Ministry of Health, Ambulance Services Liaison and Emergency Services Tactical Advisory Group Member
- **ROY BREEZE**
Fire and Emergency Liaison at the Operational Command Centre
- **AARON WATERREUS**
NCMC Insights team, then Emergency Services Coordination Group representative into the All-of-Government Personal Protective Equipment workstream
- **PETE GALLAGHER**
NCMC Isolation, Quarantine and Repatriation team.
- **GLENN THOMPSON**
Planning Manager, National Crisis Management Centre
- **RHYS JONES**
Emergency Services Coordination Group, Chair
- **NICK PYATT**
Emergency Services Working Group, Chair
- **PETE VAN SCHAARDENBURG**
Communications support to NCMC
- **BRIAR EDMONDS**
Communications support to Ministry of Health

PEER SUPPORT A PHONE CALL AWAY

Peer Support is part of Fire and Emergency’s commitment to support our people’s psychological wellbeing. The service, which offers our people a chance to talk confidentially about things that might be affecting their work or personal lives, has been particularly relevant during the challenges of COVID-19. One person on the end of those calls is Senior Firefighter, Alastair Thornley.

“I joined the crew at Timaru Fire Station 34 years ago. Helping the public and members of the service has always been at the forefront of my reasons for being a firefighter,” explains Alastair, who became a Peer Supporter in 2001.

At that time, the focus was on critical incident stress management. Addressing the psychological wellbeing of individuals has become equally important over the years.

“Being in the job for a while has helped my understanding of the issues firefighters can have,” Alastair says, who knew their services would be needed during lockdown and decided to take a proactive approach.

“The Te Ihu welfare team decided we would contact every member in our area and check that they and their families were okay,” explains Alastair, who personally phoned around 200 personnel.

“Luckily in Fire and Emergency and the community at large, any negative stigma around seeking psychological support has been erased and seeking help is as normal as going to your doctor for a physical ailment.”

Further north in Wellington, Peer Support was made available to our people based at NHQ for the first time in March.

“Lending an ear and allowing people to express their emotions can help guide them to potential solutions,” explains Rosie Chote, a coordinator in the Volunteer Resilience Team and NHQ Peer Supporter.

More information about Peer Support is on the Safety, Health and Wellbeing section on the Portal.



NATIONAL MANAGERS WELCOMED INTO NEW BRANCH ROLES

On 2 June, we welcomed a number of leaders into their new roles in our Finance and Business Operations (FABO) and Organisational Strategy and Capability Development (OSCD) Branches.

This occasion marked an important milestone in standing up the reorganised structures for OSCD and FABO, as we continue building our future-focused and unified organisation.

While they are very diverse roles, a common and important responsibility of all these new positions is collective leadership accountabilities across all Branches. These leaders' focus on working together across our organisation will help Fire and Emergency stay effectively and efficiently

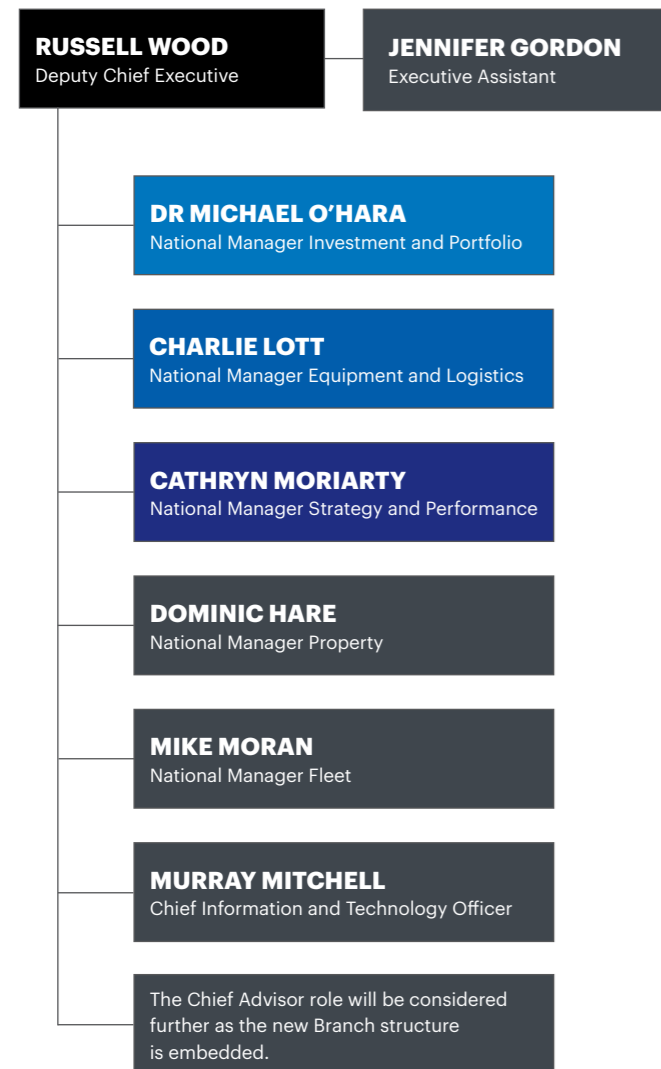
focused on what we are ultimately all here to do – protect people, property and our environment.

Both OSCD and FABO Branches are now working through remaining appointments and Directorate establishment and structures.

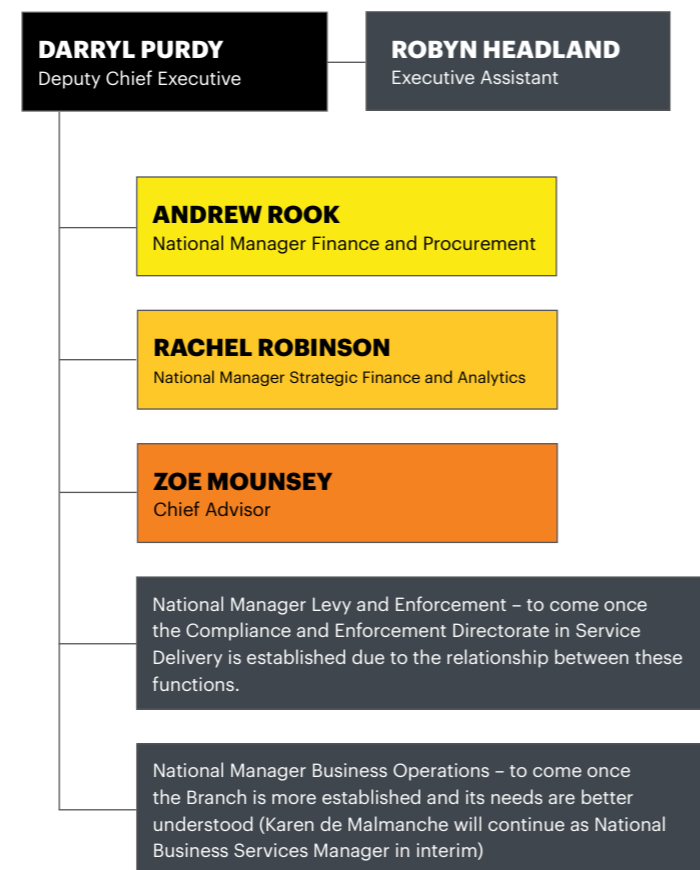
The reorganised Office of the Chief Executive (OCE) Branch stood up on 2 March this year. Recruitment for the People Branch leadership team, which was paused during the COVID-19 lockdown, has since progressed with some appointments recently announced.

We'll update you on the new appointments to these two Branches in the next issue of Ignite. In the meantime, meet the people in the new OSCD and FABO leadership roles.

Organisational Strategy and Capability Development



Finance and Business Operations



DR MICHAEL O'HARA, NATIONAL MANAGER INVESTMENT AND PORTFOLIO

Mike's team is responsible for helping Fire and Emergency define, deliver and benefit from the projects and programmes we undertake. They provide advice to our Executive Leadership Team on the projects that will best advance our strategy.

"I am looking forward to being part of the Fire and Emergency team and helping our people to keep making the difference that they do."

Mike comes to us from NZ Defence Force and has spent time with other agencies including Kāinga Ora (Housing NZ), Biosecurity New Zealand and ACC.



CHARLIE LOTT, NATIONAL MANAGER EQUIPMENT AND LOGISTICS

Charlie is responsible for making sure we have a nationally consistent approach to procuring, distributing, operating, maintaining and disposing of operational equipment that meets our strategic priorities, operational requirements, and local needs.

"I'm most looking forward to the challenges of building a high-performing, integrated and collaborative equipment and logistics organisation; an organisation that is strategy-led, knowledge and evidence-fed and values-driven."

Charlie comes to Fire and Emergency after 42 years with the NZ Defence Force.



CATHRYN MORIARTY, NATIONAL MANAGER STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE

Cathryn is responsible for the strategy, planning, performance, policy, research and library functions. These teams come into the Directorate from two different Branches (OSCD, FABO) and the Integration workstream.

"I've been here for 18 months as the Strategy Manager so have got to know the business a little over that time. I'm

looking forward to building on that knowledge to bring the new Directorate together."

Before Fire and Emergency, Cathryn had a mix of frontline, strategic advice and management roles at Ministry for Primary Industries, Ministry of Fisheries, and NZ Defence Force.



ANDREW ROOK, NATIONAL MANAGER FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT

Andrew leads the team responsible for supporting the wider organisation on all our strategic supplier management and tactical purchasing activities. His team also manages levy collection, statutory compliance, tax, insurance and treasury functions.

"I'm looking forward to sharing some of my experiences from outside of the Government sector and doing my part in keeping New Zealand safe, even if it is from the 10th floor of NHQ."

Andrew joins us from Chorus and roles at New Zealand Rugby Union and the International Rugby Board.



RACHEL ROBINSON, NATIONAL MANAGER STRATEGIC FINANCE AND ANALYTICS

Rachel leads the development and delivery of strategic finance and analytics, including budgeting, forecasting, business intelligence and reports.

"I'm really looking forward to getting to know the organisation, especially the people. I am keen to understand the challenges we face and help develop a clear path forward so Fire and Emergency can continue to grow and

perform even better. I have worked in the Public Sector for many years, so am looking forward to applying these skills to achieve this."

A Chartered Accountant for over 20 years, Rachel has worked in large consulting firms such as KPMG and for public sector agencies including Kāinga Ora (Housing NZ) and Department of Internal Affairs.



ZOE MOUNSEY, CHIEF ADVISOR

Zoe supports Darryl Purdy as DCE and the wider FABO leadership team with strategic and tactical advice and expertise.

Zoe moves into this role after three years as Principal Advisor, Research, leading our investment in research and supporting evidence-based decision making.

"So far, I am enjoying the variety of the role. I need to have a big picture view about what is happening across the organisation so I can help the Branch get the information it needs to be effective and maximise collaboration with other Branches within Fire and Emergency."

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES THROUGH LANGUAGE

Sometimes it takes finding a shared passion to build a strong relationship. For Allan Brown, Senior Firefighter at Hastings Station, it is a passion for language and learning that's helping to develop stronger relationships between Hawkes Bay families and Fire and Emergency.

For the past eight years, Allan has worked with schools in Maraenui in Napier, and Camberley and Flaxmere in Hastings to design and deliver safety-focused lessons around a series of 12 bilingual stories – initially in Māori and English, and now in Samoan and English. Firefighters, and more recently Police Officers too, have then visited schools to read the books and talk with students about how to stay safe.

Allan explains that the books use a kaupapa Māori educational approach to reducing the risk of fires and other dangers in vulnerable communities.

“They tell a Māori story about health and wellbeing – about how Te Kōtuku, the white heron, protected Tane-nui-a-rangi. We use that story to coach tamariki to make good decisions for their health and wellbeing, and for other people as well.”

Students are also encouraged to take the books home to read with their families.

Translating the books into Samoan coincided with Samoan Language Week in late May. They were delivered to Flaxmere schools with a high proportion of Samoan students and read by teachers due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Allan estimates around 5000 books have been shared with children and their families across these communities.

If you're interested in using these books to engage with schools and families, please contact Allan Brown: allan.brown@fireandemergency.nz



A teacher reads to students in Samoan at Flaxmere's Irongate School

VIRTUAL TRAINING TAKES OFF IN TE IHU

Rob Millener is Region Trainer Te Ihu and when he received a request from the Rai Valley Fire Station for MVA pump support refresher training during COVID-19, they had to do things differently.

“So we looked at virtual training, and I created material from existing content that we could use online, through PowerPoint, video and whiteboards. I sent the training link to all brigades in the Tasman/Marlborough Area expecting to get around 10 volunteers joining in – we got 126!” said Rob.

While there were a few hitches to iron out, the feedback was so good that Rob and his fellow trainers have presented five

virtual sessions on a variety of subjects to brigades in their Region.

“We're presenting material to reinforce current skills, with no formal assessment - and the feedback has been really positive,” he said.

Pete Scarlet, Manager Region Training, says the benefits are significant for trainers and volunteers.

“We can bring together a large number of volunteers without the limitations of travel and time commitments. We're looking at ways to explore options for this type of delivery throughout COVID-19 restrictions and beyond,” he said.



WORKING WITH TANGATA WHENUA FOR SAFER ENVIRONMENTS

As an organisation, we're proud to commit to working with tangata whenua to create safer environments for Māori and all New Zealand communities. The appointment of a Project Manager for the Māori Outcomes Programme is a major step in continuing to bring this to life.

Isaia Piho took up the new role in April. He was previously Te Kei Principal Advisor – Fire Risk Management and has been part of several national advisory steering groups. He says his new role is a continuation of his drive since he joined in 2009, to give back to communities and help make a real difference.

“I joined as a firefighter in Dunedin and being on the trucks was the best job in the world, but I've loved the chance to be in roles that have a wider view across many communities, with the potential of a bigger impact,” said Isaia.

“The Māori Outcomes Programme allows us to make some serious inroads into reversing the disproportionately high numbers of Māori affected by fire incidents and to bring an indigenous perspective into our workplace that helps everyone.

“We want this programme to be meaningful and owned by every person in our organisation. It's about building

our mōhiotanga, our knowledge base, with the right understanding, tools and information we can all use.

“There's so much richness and depth in indigenous concepts and values such as manaakitanga that see the world as interconnected, and they can be applied across all cultures,” he said.

Piki Thomas, National Manager Kaupapa Māori, says Isaia's experience and ability to bring people together and forge strong relationships will add real strength to the programme.

“The key drivers for the programme are highlighted in our commitment statement to recognise Māori as tangata whenua and key stakeholders in Fire and Emergency's work. Isaia will work with all parts of the organisation to ensure the programme is well understood and supported for the benefit of everyone here and communities across Aotearoa.”

PROFILE: REBECCA KEOGHAN, DEPUTY CHAIR

A passion for health and safety, and leadership drives Rebecca Keoghan, our Deputy Chair, who joined the Fire and Emergency New Zealand Board in June 2019.

“Being appointed to the Fire and Emergency Board was a huge honour. Protecting people’s safety and wellbeing has been a constant strand in my career, from my studies in medical science to a health and safety leadership focus across many roles.

I’m also married to a firefighter, so I truly know first-hand the sacrifices made by our people and their families!

One of the things that has always impressed me is that our people turn up whenever they’re needed, ready to roll up their sleeves and get the job done. This dedication is so admirable, but it means we need to be incredibly conscious of the health, safety and wellbeing of our people.

At Board-level, we keep a strong eye on this area, and we have made some great strides, but there’s always more we can do. I’m particularly interested in how we are monitoring our critical risks, how we are growing health and safety leadership, and how we engage our people at all levels of the organisation on this topic.

Our people are at the heart of all my considerations around the Board table. I live rurally on the West Coast, and every time I hear our local siren going, it makes me think about the people who are giving their time and dedication to supporting others. I’ll never take this for granted.

Looking ahead, I’m particularly interested in how we move more in the proactive space – driving resilience and reducing risks. We’re already doing this, but I think Local Advisory Committees will play a critical role in how we enhance this in the future.

I’m heartened by the sheer volume of work that’s been done at Fire and Emergency in the past year. Our Executive and Service Delivery Leadership Teams are now in place, we’ve developed systems, tools and ways of operating that will set us up for our next phase of unification. At the same time we’ve maintained the trust and confidence of the public, and provided truly excellent operational responses to some of the most challenging incidents ever – both locally and overseas.

I will never underestimate how tough this has been at times for many of you, and I know we are not there yet. The people I’ve met since joining the Board have reinforced to me the quality and the calibre of our organisation, no matter what their role is or where they are based.

I could not be more thankful to you all for both the work you do, and how you do it. Thank you all.”

As well as her role with Fire and Emergency, Rebecca is Chair of Tai Poutini Polytechnic, and a member of the boards of the Judicial Control Authority and Gravity Dance Studies. She and her husband also manage their 300-hectare dairy farm. Rebecca was awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to business and named the 2016 Dairy Woman of the Year.



A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES – MIHI MAI RĀ

E koekoe te tūi, e ketekete te kākā, e kūkū te kererū
(The tūi chatters, the kākā cackles and the kererū coos)

As this whakataukī suggests, it takes all kinds of voices to create a harmony. And to help us hear the voices that might not normally be heard, we’ve just welcomed 50 community-minded New Zealanders to our first seven Local Advisory Committees.

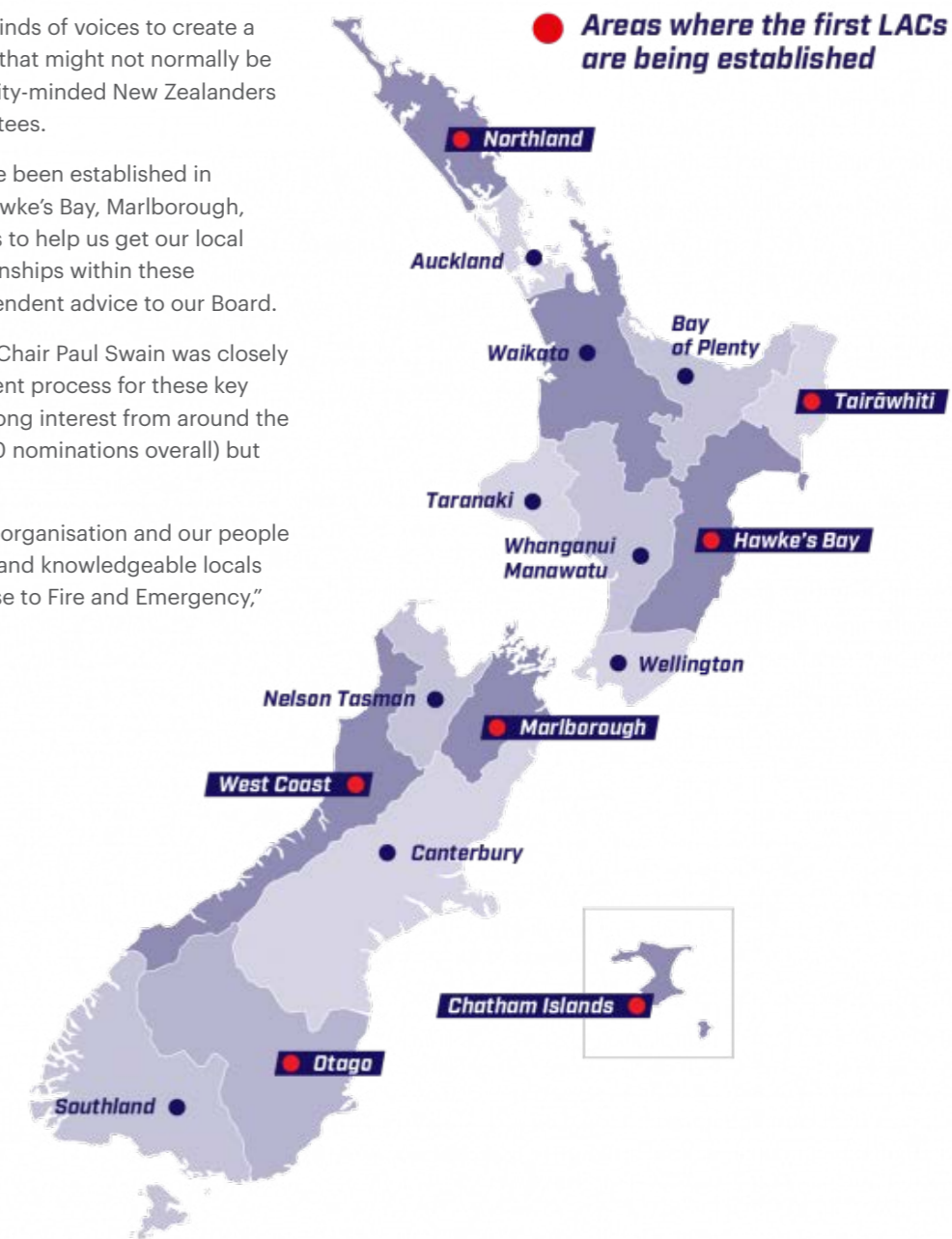
Our first Local Advisory Committees have been established in the West Coast, Northland, Tairāwhiti, Hawke’s Bay, Marlborough, Chatham Islands, and Otago. Their role is to help us get our local planning right and strengthen our relationships within these communities, as well as providing independent advice to our Board.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand Board Chair Paul Swain was closely involved in the evaluation and appointment process for these key roles. He says that not only was there strong interest from around the country in these positions (more than 150 nominations overall) but the calibre of nominees was impressive.

“I think it’s a reflection of how highly this organisation and our people are regarded, that so many experienced and knowledgeable locals are willing to offer their time and expertise to Fire and Emergency,” Mr Swain said.

The newly appointed Local Advisory Committees are keen to get started and will first meet virtually to get quickly up to speed in the post COVID-19 environment. After that, they’ll be meeting regularly in person to plan how best to approach this important work.

You’ll be hearing more about what Local Advisory Committees are up to over the coming months, and as they start engaging with their communities early next year. In the meantime, check out the newly-appointed members in each local area on the Fire and Emergency website (fireandemergency.nz/LACs).



THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE SCENES

"To get from a simple question to a simple answer, you sometimes need to unravel a lot of technical information and then wind it back up again," according to our National Substances Advisor, Dr Trudy Geoghegan, who says it has definitely been the case for COVID-19.

Behind the scenes of the Fire and Emergency COVID-19 response, several people worked to understand the science and technical information that enabled them to make evidence-based decisions about everything from how to operate, how to clean, what to wear (PPE) and what chemicals and practices to use or not use.

"Our usual cleaning providers were closed, so our firefighters had to wash their own PPE. Working out how to wash wildfire clothing on-station without compromising it required us to understand what types of chemicals can damage the specialist fire-resistant fabric and then understand the chemistry and ingredients of a wide range of domestic laundry detergents, so we could recommend which laundry detergents to use.

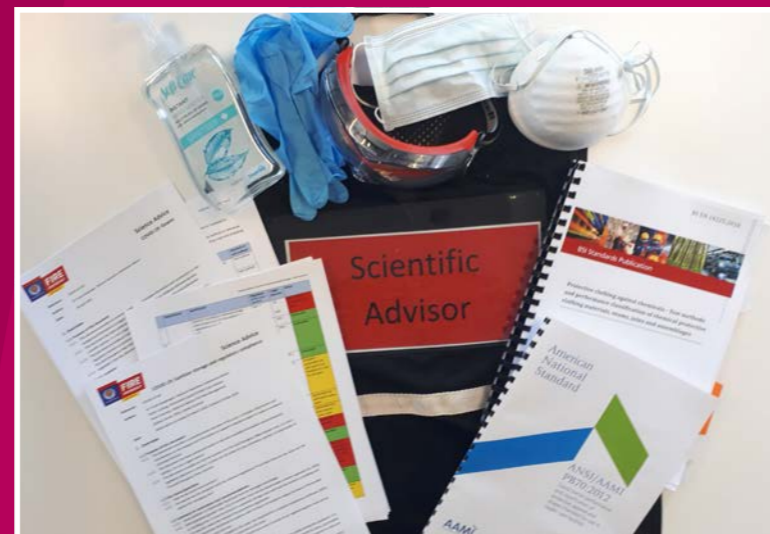
"Sometimes the key to solving the problem is not just understanding the information that is available, but also knowing what is missing. For example, not every hand sanitiser or cleaning product that was promoted to us contained ingredients that were effective, or could show that it was effective, against COVID-19. We assessed carefully what we would buy and only issued those that we knew were safe."

Trudy says it was also essential to understand the details of standards and not just take things at face value.

"This was important when we needed to unpick overseas PPE recommendations and performance criteria to convert them to New Zealand standards, regulatory approvals, and the performance standards of PPE that we can access. For example, we had to compare the test criteria in the New Zealand Standard for P2 masks to the overseas standards recommended by the World Health Organization to determine that they were the same as the European test criteria (cited by the WHO) and therefore that our P2 masks were suitable for use against COVID-19.

"Some of the challenges were the speed at which questions came in and at which decisions needed to be made; the rapidly changing information about the virus and, in some cases, that the preferred, perfect world option was not always available (e.g. hand sanitiser or coveralls) meant we needed to have a plan B and just in case a plan C and D as well."

Trudy says people from across NHQ, including those with expertise in hazardous substances, engineering, health and safety, medical, equipment, procurement, and legal all contributed to the scientific and technical input behind the decisions made and guidance produced for COVID-19.



Dr Trudy Geoghegan and her colleagues researched cleaning products and processes to help our organisation make informed decisions and keep people safe during COVID.



James Marks



Annabel Wood and Dad, Mark

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

We have some amazing stories in our organisation of family involvement in firefighting through the generations.

James Marks is a volunteer firefighter at Waikuku Beach near Rangiora and his family connection dates back to 1917.

Sixteen members of James' family have volunteered, starting with his uncle's uncle, Charles Ingram, who joined the Dunedin Metropolitan Fire Board in 1917 when he was 17 – and stayed for 41.5 years.

His grandfather, Bill Lynn, served at the Christchurch City Fire Station and three of his uncles were also volunteer firefighters. But it was his uncle Billy Dixon who he really caught the bug from.

"Uncle Billy was Station Officer at the old Woodend Volunteer Fire Brigade, and I'd be down there helping out on Monday nights, rolling up hoses and things like that – I was only four!" said James.

"In 2014, I decided it was time to continue the family tradition and fulfil a childhood dream."

From a long family connection to a new one, Annabel Wood joined the Kerikeri Volunteer Fire Brigade when she was 16, following her father, Mark Wood. She is one of our youngest volunteers.

"My Dad became a volunteer when I was eight and I was desperate to know what he was doing on those call outs.

"When we moved from Hunterville to Kerikeri, I'd hang around the station when Dad was on call waiting for him to come back. They let me sit in the control room and I was hooked!" said Annabel.

She loves the close, family feel at the brigade and the support she receives from everyone around her.

"Like all brigades, we deal with tough stuff but the team always check up on me afterwards. They've done a great job looking after a young mind."

Both James and Annabel say the motivation for all family members was and remains the opportunity to help keep their communities safe.

If firefighting runs in your family's blood and you're happy to share your story, please let us know. Email communications@fireandemergency.nz

TECHNOLOGY VITAL IN SEARCH FOR MISSING TRAMPERS

The successful recovery of two missing trampers in Kahurangi National Park in May was the result of a lot of hard ground work, close agency collaboration, and up-to-the minute technology.

The pair entered the Park's rugged and remote Anatori Valley area, 186 kms North West of Nelson, on 9 May for a seven-day walk.

The New Zealand Police initiated a Search and Rescue event on 19 May and on 20 May requested assistance from Fire and Emergency. On 21 May, Nelson Station Officer, Kevin O'Connor and Firefighter Andi Waddington arrived at the Anatoki River in the Hazmat Command Unit.

The USAR Southern Team – Richard Humphries, Charles Arrowsmith, and Andy McEwan from Christchurch – had already spent the previous night working with their thermal imaging drones over the dense bush.

Kevin says the 'Anatori Command' team was established, comprising two Fire and Emergency operators (Senior Firefighter Ian Woolfe replaced Andi on day three), two Search and Rescue team members, and a Police Officer. Technology quickly became a vital part of the search.

"It was great to see the Command Unit's capability in use outside of a fire response. We managed three Nelson Search and Rescue VHF channels and used the Command Unit's radio linking capability and satellite, an aviation channel, and a Fire and Emergency VHF channel.

"We used the VHF high gain aerial on the camera mast to communicate with the search team. There was a massive amount of data transfer, including uploading 20 GB of drone

footage and hundreds of tasking, debriefing and GPS files being sent and received. The drone photos provided altitude and latitude and longitude coordinates giving us the ability to upload to Google Earth and/or SarTrack to pinpoint areas of interest."

"At the height of the search, 15 to 22 teams were deployed in areas with no walking access, so they had to be winched in and out by helicopter."

On Tuesday, 26 May, and after 19 days, a helicopter flying the Mt Cook Alpine Rescue Team spotted smoke in a gully near the headwaters of the Fraser River, and the missing trampers were found with only minor injuries.

Kevin says everyone was "jubilant".

"It was a mammoth effort by many including the NZ Police (lead agency), LandSar (Ground, Cave and Canyon Search and Rescue specialists), USAR Southern, Nelson Station, (acknowledgement to SouthCom and the Takaka, Collingwood, and Motueka Volunteer Fire Brigades for their assistance), Department of Conservation Mt Cook Alpine Rescue Team, Dog Teams, New Zealand Defence Force, and Area Management working with the multi-agency incident management team based at the EOC – CDEM Headquarters."

Kevin said the local community also played a big part through granting land access, local knowledge, accommodation, resources – and home baking.



THANK YOU, FROM AFAC

Over five months last summer, Fire and Emergency deployed more than 290 personnel to help our Australian colleagues fight devastating wildfires in Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales. AFAC's Chief Executive Officer, Stuart Ellis, sent this letter to express his sincere thanks.



27 April 2020

Mr R Jones CNZM
Chief Executive
Fire and Emergency New Zealand
PO Box 2133
WELLINGTON NZ 6140

Dear Rhys

Support during Australia's 2019/2020 national bushfire emergency

I am writing to sincerely thank you for your agency's invaluable contribution to sustaining the Australian national effort during the 2019/2020 fire season.

This season has been one of the most significant in Australia's recorded history, with its scale, severity and duration leading to the largest nationally coordinated interstate and international deployment of fire and emergency personnel to have been mounted in Australia.

Over 7,000 interstate and international personnel have deployed across Australia during the season. This support from all CCOSC members and jurisdictional agencies has been instrumental in allowing the AFAC National Resource Sharing Centre to coordinate a truly national and trans-Tasman response to what has been a uniquely challenging fire season.

We will be writing directly to those who deployed in AFAC NRSC Deployment Manager and Duty Officer roles to express our appreciation for their participation, as well as offering our thanks to our colleagues from USA and Canada.

As well as expressing my gratitude to your agency and all of your people who have contributed to the effort this season, I would also like to thank you personally for the invaluable support you have provided to the AFAC NRSC over this time.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Ellis, AM
Chief Executive Officer
AFAC

AFAC is the National Council for fire and emergency services

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